

Before the  
**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**  
Washington, D.C. 20054

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

In the Matter of )

Telephone Number Portability )

CC Docket No. 95-116

DA 96-358

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**SUPPLEMENTAL REPLY COMMENTS OF  
MFS COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY, INC.**

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## INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996).

<sup>2</sup> *In the Matter of Number Portability*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CC Docket 95-116, RM8535, 10 FCC Rcd 12350 (Released July 13, 1995). ("Notice")

determine but must: (1) order that interim number portability be provided and, (2) develop a competitively neutral mechanism for recovering the costs of interim number portability.

# **I. PERMANENT NUMBER PORTABILITY USING LRN IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AND SHOULD BE ORDERED**

MFS agrees with the advice given by NARUC that “the FCC should use the data gathered in this proceeding and from State implementation proceedings to establish nationwide policy guidelines concerning ... number portability.”<sup>3</sup> The data from this proceeding and state implementation proceedings clearly indicate that permanent number portability is technically feasible and that the industry consensus is that LRN is the appropriate technology for permanent number portability. Almost without exception, the comments concluded that LRN is the technology that the industry and state regulators are embracing for permanent number portability.<sup>4</sup> MFS agrees with Ameritech when it recommends that “the Commission can expedite deployment and help prevent waste and inefficiency if it prescribes the architecture for long term number portability that has already been adopted in several states, including Illinois, Maryland, California, and Georgia.”<sup>5</sup> LRN is the number portability architecture adopted everywhere that has considered permanent number portability; the Commission should adopt LRN as the architecture for permanent number portability.

Even though the comments of the New York Department of Public Service indicated that “the New York Commission has endorsed LRN as the long-term implementation method” for

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<sup>3</sup> NARUC Comments at pg. 1.

<sup>4</sup> AT&T Comments, Ameritech Comments at pp. 7-9, New York Department of Public Service Comments at pg. 1, MCI Comments at pp. 3-7, California Cable TV Association Comments at pp. 2-7, Sprint Comments at pp. 2-4, Time-Warner Comments at pp. 6-7, Association for Local Telecommunications Services Comments at pg. 4, and TCG Comments at pp. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ameritech Comments at pg. 5.

number portability in New York,<sup>6</sup> NYNEX curiously insists that LRN is not a long term number portability solution, but merely an addressing scheme.<sup>7</sup> Pacific Bell does not argue that permanent number portability is infeasible, but criticizes LRN as too narrow, and advocates that local exchange carriers should be allowed to choose the number portability technology that best suits their needs.<sup>8</sup> GTE does not argue that LRN cannot be used as the technology for permanent number portability, but argues that while the "LRN proposal has been favorably received in a number of states, reliable cost estimates of LRN have not been resolved,"<sup>9</sup> and thus, further study is warranted.

The only commentators who counsel the Commission to delay the implementation of number portability are the incumbent local exchange carriers who have an obvious economic interest in erecting competitive barriers to thwart the development of local telephone competition. NYNEX, for example, asks the Commission to direct the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions ("ATIS") to develop a technically feasible number portability solution<sup>10</sup> in spite of the fact that more than one industry task force in state proceedings have already concluded that LRN is the appropriate architecture for permanent number portability. In its comments, BellSouth acknowledges that "at least nine states have endorsed an LRN call model for a long term number portability solution" but it recommends that the Commission establish an industry work group to study long term number portability and report back to the Commission on the full range of operational impacts.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> New York Department of Public Service Comments at pg. 1.

<sup>7</sup> NYNEX Comments at pg. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Pacific Bell Comments at pp. 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> GTE Comments at pg. 5.

<sup>10</sup> NYNEX Comments at pg. 4, footnote 3.

<sup>11</sup> BellSouth Comments at pg. 7.

As AT&T indicates in its comments, the LRN database development process was forecasted at 18 months in the Illinois workshops, switch vendors are prepared to implement LRN by the second quarter of 1997 and full number portability can be implemented within two years in the top 84 MSAs.<sup>12</sup> More comments and studies, as suggested by incumbent local exchange carriers, serve no useful purpose and should be rejected. The Commission should simply order permanent local number portability using LRN.

Some commentors suggested that number portability be implemented when local exchange carriers receive a *bona fide* request for number portability<sup>13</sup> or that rural telephone companies should have sharply reduced obligations to provide number portability.<sup>14</sup> They argue that it is not sound policy to require number portability where no competition exists. As a mechanism to avoid wasteful investments but comply with the requirements of the Telecommunications Act, MFS suggests that the Commission require that permanent number portability be implemented by a local exchange carrier within 18 months of an NXX code being activated in the Local Exchange Routing Guide ("LERG") and assigned to a competitor.

## **II. NUMBER PORTABILITY IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE -- THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT REQUIRES THAT THE COMMISSION FOCUS ON COMPETITIVELY NEUTRAL COST RECOVERY**

Even if there were some legitimate debate about the appropriate architecture for number portability, clearly, permanent number portability is technically feasible. As a policy matter, given that number portability is technically feasible, the Telecommunications Act requires that the Commission determine the competitively neutral cost recovery mechanisms.

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<sup>12</sup> AT&T Comments at pp. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> USTA Comments at pg. 3.

<sup>14</sup> OPASTCO Comments at pp. 5-9.

MFS was the only party to offer specific comments on the appropriate mechanism for cost recovery. In its comments, MFS suggested that there are two types of costs associated with number portability: (1) the common or shared costs incurred to establish, maintain and administer the common or shared number portability database and associated general facilities and procedures; and, (2) the costs which each individual carrier must incur to conform its own network, its own operating, signaling and routing procedures, and its own operational and administrative support systems. Competitive neutrality requires that only the common or shared costs be recovered from all telecommunications carriers.<sup>15</sup> An individual carrier's network costs, however, should not be included in the costs of number portability to be recovered from other carriers. Clearly, it would not be competitively neutral to allow carriers to recover from competing telecommunications providers any of a carrier's individual number portability costs or any portion of the carrier's share of the common number portability costs. Likewise, it would not be competitively neutral if an incumbent local exchange carrier simply inflated its interconnection charges to cover its number portability costs.

GTE's suggested definition of competitive neutrality is wrong. GTE suggests that a competitively neutral cost recovery mechanism is one that does not create an incentive for a customer to either stay with an existing provider/service or to move to a new provider/service to avoid any or all of the cost of portability.<sup>16</sup> The Telecommunications Act, however, requires that the costs of number portability be recovered from all telecommunications carriers, and does not

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<sup>15</sup> MFS suggested that any recovery of common or shared number portability costs (permanent or interim) be based on carriers' revenues net of payments to intermediaries and that there be strict rules prohibiting recovery of any individual costs from services provided to other telecommunications providers. In addition, and as described in Section III below, MFS suggested that because interim number portability is an inferior form of number portability, it should be provided to new entrants at no charge. As described in Section III, below, in instances of interim number portability, the Commission should also order a flow through of terminating compensation.

<sup>16</sup> GTE Comments at pg. 4.

mandate end-user charges. Certainly, carriers might pass-on their number portability obligations to their end-users (or their shareholders), but fundamentally, the Act requires that number portability costs be borne by telecommunications carriers. Likewise, the duty to provide number portability is one of the interconnection duties imposed on local exchange carriers who interconnect with other carriers. In that statutory context, competitive neutrality does not refer to end-user incentives as GTE suggests, but rather, requires an analysis of charges assessed to other, competing telecommunications carriers.

In a footnote, SBC suggests that competitive neutrality require that “the Commission consider the principles of cost causation and cost/benefit in its adoption of rules.”<sup>17</sup> There is absolutely nothing in the Telecommunications Act that requires that number portability costs be apportioned based on a cost/benefit analysis or on principles of cost causation. It simply requires that the costs of number portability “shall be borne by all telecommunications carriers on a competitively neutral basis.”<sup>18</sup>

Without support of any kind, OPASTCO asserts that implementation of number portability for smaller carriers will cost a lot, “possibly leading to increased rates which could force subscribers to drop off the network.”<sup>19</sup> USTA argues that technical feasibility should be defined to include consideration of whether a carrier is economically capable of making the required investments.<sup>20</sup> Bell Atlantic claims that number portability costs in Maryland are estimated to range between \$64 and \$124 million;<sup>21</sup> Pacific Bell argues that it will cost it \$1

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<sup>17</sup> SBC Comments at pg. 2, footnote 4.

<sup>18</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 251(e)(2).

<sup>19</sup> OPASTCO Comments at pp. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> USTA Comments at pg. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Bell Atlantic Comments at pg. 2.



billion over three years to implement LRN.<sup>22</sup> Apart from incumbents' obvious incentives to inflate their cost estimates to delay number portability, these cost estimates are irrelevant. The Telecommunications Act requires number portability; number portability is not an optional service. Irrespective of how incumbent local telephone carriers feel about number portability, Congress has made a fundamental national policy decision that the public benefits such number portability brings to promoting local service competition exceed the costs of implementing number portability. The Commission's statutory directive is to determine how to recover those costs in a competitively neutral manner from all telecommunications carriers.

Ameritech suggests that the Commission appoint a Joint-Board to consider cost recovery issues.<sup>23</sup> BellSouth and NYNEX suggest that the Commission open a separate Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to consider costing issues<sup>24</sup> whereas Bell Atlantic argues that cost recovery cannot be left for a further proceeding at a later date but must be resolved as part of any decision about number portability but offers no suggestions for cost recovery.<sup>25</sup> These suggestions should be recognized for what they are -- attempts to delay number portability and thwart the development of local telephone competition. The Commission can and should set recovery rules in this proceeding as suggested by MFS in its comments.

### **III. THE COMMISSION MUST ALSO ORDER INTERIM NUMBER PORTABILITY AT COMPETITIVELY NEUTRAL RATES**

Some commentators observed that the Telecommunications Act does not affect the Commission's responsibilities in the area of interim number portability. Ameritech, for example,

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<sup>22</sup> Pacific Bell Comments at pg. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ameritech Comments at pp. 2, 4.

<sup>24</sup> BellSouth Comments at pp. 7-8; NYNEX Comments at pg. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Bell Atlantic Comments at pp. 1-2.

argues that since remote call forwarding ("RCF") and direct inward dialing ("DID") trunks are available, the Commission need not take any further action on interim number portability.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, BellSouth argued that the Commission should not interfere with states' efforts in requiring RCF and DID as interim number portability solutions<sup>27</sup> and Bell Atlantic argued that there is no need under the Act for the Commission to take any action with respect to interim number portability arrangements. Those arguments are absolutely untrue.

At the most basic level, not all states have ordered interim number portability or concluded their inquiries into interim number portability. Unless the Commission orders interim number portability new entrants will have to litigate (and win) the issue in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Thus, the failure of the Commission to create a national number portability mandate -- permanent or interim -- raises a substantial barrier to entry.

When it requires that the costs of number portability be borne by all telecommunications carriers on a competitively neutral basis, Section 251(e)(2) of the Telecommunications Act does not distinguish between full and interim number portability. Thus, the same competitively neutral cost recovery that applies to full number portability should apply to interim number portability with some modifications that recognize the inferior nature of interim number portability. No state requires that the costs of interim number portability be borne by all telecommunications carriers on a competitive neutral basis. Rather, tariffed rates for RCF and DID typically apply, and new entrants pay 100% of the costs of interim number portability and provide whatever contribution is embedded in the tariffed rates for RCF and DID trunks. That is not competitively neutral and does not spread the costs among all carriers.

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<sup>26</sup> Ameritech Comments at pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> BellSouth Comments at pp. 5-6.

Rather than leave interim number portability to the states, as suggested by the incumbent local exchange carriers, the Commission must establish pricing and costing guidelines for interim number portability offerings as required by the Telecommunications Act. MFS suggests that interim number portability be provided at no charge to new entrants for at least three reasons. First, the incremental costs of providing RCF and DID trunks to new entrants are small. Second, if interim number portability services are provided at no charge, that will create economic incentives for incumbent local exchange carriers to move forward with permanent number portability. Third, interim number portability services degrade the quality of service provided to new entrants while incumbents enjoy a higher grade of service for their customers. As the Commission has done with inferior grade access services, a steep discount is an entirely appropriate mechanism to ensure competitive neutrality.<sup>28</sup>

If charges are applied to interim number portability, the costs of such offerings should be apportioned among all telecommunications carriers based on their revenues net of payments to intermediaries as described in MFS's comments. In addition, in setting pricing and costing standards for interim number portability, to ensure competitive neutrality, the Commission should require a flow-through of terminating compensation. For example, if a call terminates to an incumbent local exchange carrier and is then forwarded to a new entrant pursuant to an RCF form of interim number portability, then the local exchange carrier should not be allowed to collect terminating compensation for the call that it forwards to the new entrant. A carrier's incentive to serve a customer will be blunted and competition distorted unless the carrier receives all of the terminating compensation associated with that customer. Likewise, under permanent number portability a carrier can be expected to receive all the terminating compensation, so it is entirely appropriate that the same hold true for interim portability.

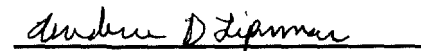
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<sup>28</sup> MCI Comments at pg. 8.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The Commission should order LRN as the appropriate architecture for permanent number portability since the comments filed indicate that this is the industry consensus number portability standard. Since number portability is clearly feasible, the Commission should focus on developing a competitively neutral cost recovery of number portability costs from all telecommunications carriers using the structure MFS suggests in its comments. The Commission should not leave interim number portability to be resolved exclusively by state regulators. The Telecommunications Act requires that the Commission establish competitively neutral cost recovery of both interim and permanent number portability.

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Dated: April 5, 1996

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 5th day of April 1996, copies of the foregoing  
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